Ruling on celebrating the middle of Sha’baan

Praise be to Allaah Who has perfected our religion for us, and has completed His Favour upon us. And blessings and peace be upon His Prophet and Messenger Muhammad, the Prophet of repentance and mercy.

Allaah says (interpretation of the meanings):

“This day, I have perfected your religion for you, completed My Favour upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion [al-Maa’idah 5:3]

“Or have they partners with Allaah (false gods) who have instituted for them a religion which Allaah has not ordained? [al-Shooraa 42:21]

In *al-Saheehayn* it is reported from ‘Aa’ishah (may Allaah be pleased with her) that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said:

“Whoever innovates something in this matter of ours [Islam] that is not part of it, will have it rejected.”

In *Saheeh Muslim* it is narrated from Jaabir (may Allaah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) used to say in his Friday khutbahs: “The best of speech is the Book of Allaah and the best of guidance is the guidance of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him). The most evil of things are those which are newly-invented, and every innovation (*bid’ah*) is a going-astray.”

And there are many aayaat and ahaadeeth which say similar things.

This clearly indicates that Allaah has perfected the religion of this *ummah*, and completed His favour upon them. He did not take the soul of His Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) until he had conveyed the Message clearly and explained to the *ummah* everything that Allaah had prescribed for it of words and deeds. He (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) explained that everything that people would innovate after he was gone, all the words and deeds that they would attribute to Islam, all of that would be thrown back on the one who invented it, even if his intention was good. The companions of the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) knew this matter, as did the scholars of Islam after them. They denounced bid’ah and warned against it, as has been stated by all those who wrote books praising the Sunnah and denouncing bid’ah, such as Ibn Waddaah, al-Tartooshi, Ibn Shaamah and others.

Among the bid’ahs that have been invented by some people is celebrating the middle of Sha’baan (*Laylat al-Nusf min Sha’baan*), and singling out that day for fasting. There is no evidence (*daleel*) for that which can be regarded as reliable. Some *da’eef* (weak) ahaadeeth have been narrated concerning its virtues, but we cannot regard them as reliable. The reports

which have been narrated concerning the virtues of prayer on this occasion are all *mawdoo'* (fabricated), as has been pointed out by many of the scholars. We will quote some of their comments below, in sha Allaah.

Some reports have also been narrated on this matter from some of the *salaf* in Syria, and others. What the majority of scholars say is that celebrating this occasion is bid'ah, and that the ahaadeeth concerning the virtues of this occasion are all *da'eef* (weak), and some of them are *mawdoo'* (fabricated) Among those who pointed this out was al-Haafiz Ibn Rajab, in his book *Lataa'if al-Ma'aarif*, and others. The *da'eef* ahaadeeth concerning acts of worship can only be acted upon in the case of acts of worship which are proven by saheeh evidence. There is no saheeh basis for celebrating the middle of Sha'baan, so we cannot follow the da'eef ahaadeeth either.

This important principle was mentioned by Imaam Abu'l-'Abbaas Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allaah have mercy on him).

The scholars (may Allaah have mercy on them) were agreed that it is obligatory to refer matters concerning which the people dispute to the Book of Allaah and the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him). Whatever ruling both or one of them give is the sharee'ah which must be followed, and whatever goes against them must be rejected. Any acts of worship which are not mentioned in them are therefore bid'ah and it is not permissible to do them, let alone call others to do them or approve of them. As Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

"O you who believe! Obey Allaah and obey the Messenger (Muhammad), and those of you (Muslims) who are in authority. (And) if you differ in anything amongst yourselves, refer it to Allaah and His Messenger, if you believe in Allaah and in the Last Day. That is better and more suitable for final determination [al-Nisaa' 4:59]

"And in whatsoever you differ, the decision thereof is with Allaah (He is the ruling Judge)"

[al-Shooraa 42:10]

"Say (O Muhammad to mankind): "If you (really) love Allaah, then follow me (i.e. accept Islamic Monotheism, follow the Qur'aan and the Sunnah), Allaah will love you and forgive you your sins [Aal 'Imraan 3:31]

"But no, by your Lord, they can have no Faith, until they make you (O Muhammad) judge in all disputes between them, and find in themselves no resistance against your decisions, and accept (them) with full submission"

[al-Nisaa' 4:65]

And there are many similar aayaat which clearly state that matters of dispute are to be referred to the Qur'aan and Sunnah, and that their ruling is to be accepted. This is the requirement of faith and this is what is best for people in this world and in the next: *"That is*

better and more suitable for final determination" [al-Nisaa' 4:59 – interpretation of the meaning] means, in the Hereafter.

Al-Haafiz Ibn Rajab (may Allaah have mercy on him) said in his book *Lataa'if al-Ma'aarif* concerning this matter – after previously discussing it – "*Laylat al-Nusf min Sha'baan* (the middle of Sha'baan) was venerated by the *Taabi'een* among the people of al-Shaam, such as Khaalid ibn Mi'daan, Makhool, Luqmaan ibn 'Aamir and others, who used to strive in worship on this night. The people took the idea of the virtue of this night and of venerating it from them. It was said that they heard of *Israa'eeli* reports (reports from Jewish sources) concerning that. Most of the scholars of the Hijaaz denounced that, including 'Ataa' and Ibn Abi Maleekah. 'Abd al-Rahmaan ibn Zayd ibn Aslam narrated that view from the *fuqahaa'* of Madeenah, and this was the view of the companions of Maalik and others. They said: this is all bid'ah… No comment from Imaam Ahmad concerning *Laylat al-Nusf min Sha'baan* is known of… Concerning spending the night of the middle of Sha'baan in prayer, there is no sound report from the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) or from his companions…"

This is what was said by al-Haafiz Ibn Rajab (may Allaah be pleased with him). He clearly states that there is no sound report from the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) or from his companions (may Allaah be pleased with them) about *Laylat al-Nusf min Sha'baan* (the middle of Sha'baan).

In every case where there is no sound shar'i evidence that a thing is prescribed in Islam, it is not permissible for the Muslim to innovate things in the religion of Allaah, whether these are individual acts or communal acts, whether he does them in secret or openly, because of the general meaning of the hadeeth of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him): "Whoever does any action that is not a part of this matter of ours [Islam], will have it rejected." And there are other *daleels* (evidence) which indicate that bid'ah is to be denounced and which warn against it.

Imaam Abu Bakr al-Tartooshi (may Allaah have mercy on him) said, in his book *al-Hawaadith wa'l-Bida'*: "Ibn Waddaah narrated that Zayd ibn Aslam said: We never met anyone among our shaykhs and fuqahaa' who paid any attention to Laylat al-Nusf min Sha'baan, or who paid any attention to the hadeeth of Makhool, or who thought that this night was any more special than other nights. It was said to Ibn Abi Maleekah that Ziyaad al-Numayri was saying that the reward of Laylat al-Nusf min Sha'baan was like the reward of Laylat al-Qadr. He said, If I heard him say that and I had a stick in my hand, I would hit him. Ziyaad was a story-teller."

Al-'Allaamah al-Shawkaani (may Allaah have mercy on him) said in *al-Fawaa'id al-Majmoo'ah*:

"The hadeeth: 'O 'Ali, whoever prays one hundred *rak'ahs* on Laylat al-Nusf min Sha'baan, reciting in each rak'ah the Opening of the Book [*Soorat al-Faatihah*] and *Qul Huwa Allaahu Ahad* ten times, Allaah will meet all his needs…' This is *mawdoo'* (fabricated) [i.e.,

it is falsely attributed to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him]. Its wording clearly states the reward that the person who does this will attain, and no man who has any common sense can doubt that this is fabricated. Also, the men of its *isnaad* are *majhool* (unknown). It was also narrated via another *isnaad*, all of which is *mawdoo'* (fabricated) and all of whose narrators are *majhool* (unknown).

In *al-Mukhtasar* he said: The hadeeth about the salaah for the middle of Sha'baan is false, and the hadeeth of 'Ali narrated by Ibn Hibbaan – " When it is the night of the middle of Sha'baan, spend that night in prayer and fast that day" – is *da'eef* (weak).

In *al-La'aali'* he said, "One hundred *rak'ahs* in the middle of Sha'baan, reciting (*Soorat*) *al-Ikhaas* ten times in each… (this is) *mawdoo'* (fabricated), and all its narrators in its three *isnaads* are *majhool* (unknown) and *da'eef* (weak). He said: and twelve *rak'ahs*, reciting *al-Ikhlaas* thirty times in each, this is mawdoo'; and fourteen (*rak'ahs*), this is *mawdoo'*.

A group of *fuqahaa'* were deceived by this hadeeth, such as the author of *al-Ihyaa'* and others, as were some of the *mufassireen*. The prayer of this night – the middle of Sha'baan – was described in different ways, all of which are false and fabricated."

Al-Haafiz al-'Iraaqi said: "The hadeeth about the prayer during the night of the middle of Sha'baan is fabricated and is falsely attributed to the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him)."

Imaam al-Nawawi said in his book *al-Majmoo'*: "The prayer that is known as *salaat al-raghaa'ib*, which is twelve rak'ahs between Maghrib and 'Ishaa' on the night of the first Friday in Rajab, and the prayer of Laylat al-Nusf min Sha'baan, of one hundred *rak'ahs* – these two prayers are reprehensible bid'ahs. No one should be deceived by the fact that they are mentioned in the books *Qoot al-Quloob* and *Ihyaa' 'Uloom al-Deen*, or by the hadeeth which is mentioned in these two books. All of that is false. Nor should they be deceived by the fact that some of the imaams were confused about this matter and wrote a few pages stating that these prayers are mustahabb, for they were mistaken in that."

Shaykh al-Imaam Abu Muhammad 'Abd al-Rahmaan ibn Ismaa'eel al-Maqdisi wrote a very valuable book proving that these (reports) are false, and he did a very good job. The scholars spoke at length about this matter, and if we were to quote all that we have read of what they have said about this matter, it would take far too long. Perhaps what we have already mentioned is sufficient to convince the seeker of truth.

From the aayahs, ahaadeeth and scholarly opinions quoted above, it is clear to the seeker of truth that celebrating the middle of Sha'baan by praying on that night or in any other way, or by singling out that day for fasting, is a bid'ah which is denounced by most of the scholars. It has no basis in the pure sharee'ah; rather it is one of the things that was innovated in Islam after the time of the Sahaabah (may Allaah be pleased with them). It is sufficient for the seeker of truth, in this case and in others, to know the words of Allaah (interpretation of the meaning):

“This day, I have perfected your religion for you…” [al-Maa’idah 5:3]

and other similar aayaat; and the words of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him):

“Whoever innovates something in this matter of ours [Islam] that is not part of it, will have it rejected”

and other similar ahaadeeth.

In *Saheeh Muslim* it is narrated that Abu Hurayrah (may Allaah be pleased with him) said: “The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: ‘Do not single out the night of Jumu’ah for praying *qiyaam* and do not single out the day of Jumu’ah for fasting, unless is it part of the ongoing regular fast of any one of you.’”

If it were permissible to single out any night for special acts of worship, the night of Jumu’ah would be the most appropriate, because the day of Jumu’ah (Friday) is the best day upon which the sun rises, as is stated in the saheeh hadeeth narrated from the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him). Since the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) warned against singling out that night for praying *qiyaam*, that indicates that it is even more prohibited to single out any other night for acts of worship, except where there is saheeh evidence to indicate that a particular night is to be singled out.

Because it is prescribed to spend the nights of Laylat al-Qadr and the other nights of Ramadaan in prayer, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) drew attention to that and urged his *ummah* to pray qiyaam during those nights. He also did that himself, as is indicated in *al-Saheehayn*, where it says that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “Whoever prays qiyaam in Ramadaan out of faith and seeking reward, Allaah will forgive him his previous sins” and “Whoever spends the night of Laylat al-Qadr in prayer out of faith and seeking reward, Allaah will forgive him his previous sins.”

But if it were prescribed to single out the night of the middle of Sha’baan, or the night of the first Friday in Rajab, or the night of the Israa’ and Mi’raaj, for celebration or for any special acts of worship, then the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) would have taught his *ummah* to do that, and he would have done it himself. If anything of the sort had happened, his companions (may Allaah be pleased with them) would have transmitted it to the *ummah*; they would not have concealed it from them, for they are the best of people and the most sincere, after the Prophets, may blessings and peace be upon them, and may Allaah be pleased with all the companions of the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him).

Now we know from the words of the scholars quoted above that there is no report from the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) or from his companions (may Allaah be pleased with them) concerning the virtue of the first night of Jumu’ah in Rajab, or the night of the middle of Sha’baan. So we know that celebrating these occasions

is an innovation that has been introduced into Islam, and that singling out these occasions for acts of worship is a reprehensible bid'ah. The same applies to the twenty-seventh night of Rajab, which some people believe is the night of the Israa' and Mi'raaj; it is not permissible to single this date out for acts of worship, or to celebrate this occasion, on the basis of the evidence (daleel) quoted above. This is the case if the exact date (of the Israa' and Mi'raaj) is known, so how about the fact that the correct scholarly view is that its date is not known! The view that it is the night of the twenty-seventh of Rajab is a false view which has no basis in the saheeh ahaadeeth. He indeed spoke well who said: "The best of matters are those which follow the guided way of the salaf, and the most evil of matters are those which are newly-innovated."

We ask Allaah to help us and all the Muslims adhere firmly to the Sunnah and to beware of everything that goes against it, for He is the Most Generous, Most Kind.

May Allaah bless His slave and Messenger, our Prophet Muhammad, and all his family and companions.

Adapted from *Majmoo' Fataawa Samaahat al-Shaykh 'Abd al-'Azeez ibn Baaz*, 2/882
